

Mississippi River Committee Minutes La Crosse August 2006

Those in attendance were: Bill Howe; Marc Schultz; Gary Dillaber; Tom Buckner; Ralph Kunkel; Lauren Smith; Ken Snow; Robert Voss; Wes Domine Kurt Theide; Gretchen Benjamin; Ron Benjamin

The meeting was called to order at 7:03 pm The meeting was posted in accordance with the Wisconsin open meeting law. There were no members of the public in attendance.

The status of the CCP for the Upper Miss refuge was reviewed. Gretchen Benjamin distributed copies of letters from Secretary Hassett on the CCP. There was concern given by several committee members that access to the river was being unduly restricted. A variety of concerns were presented including loss of hunting area; need public involvement in stepdown plans; FWS needs to work with the state in the rules process; prefer slow-no-wake to electric motor only areas; need to complete and implement beach plans; loss of state authority under the state constitution and public trust doctrine. There was support for resolving the unresolved issues raised in Secretary Hassett's letter to FWS. Kurt Theide said that the Migratory committee had authorized a letter to FWS on the CCP. He said that WCC chairman Ed Harvey could sign a letter that reflected concerns of both committees Motion by Ken Snow second by Gary Dillaber to authorize sending a letter to FWS with the committee concerns. Motion passed unanimously. Marc Schultz said he would draft the committee concerns in a letter and contact Ed Harvey regarding how to proceed.

Gretchen Benjamin reviewed the status of the EMP program. Currently the EMP spending authorization is at \$16 in the senate and \$20 million in the House. The bill is scheduled for conference committee. The program needs at least \$20 million to operate effectively.

Bill Howe noted several meetings including the EMP celebration in La Crosse on Aug 23; the Gibbs Chute Hunt meeting in La Crosse on Sept 5; COE Lock and Dam 3 meeting on Sept 6; and Lock and Dam 9 dedication on Aug 30.

Gretchen Benjamin reviewed the status of NESP. She said the WRDA has passed the house and senate with different versions and is headed for conference committee. She distributed a two-page description of changes that would strengthen the bill which are being championed by UMRBA.

The committee discussed invasive species including ballast water regulations. They all need to be promulgated at the federal level to achieve effective control of species entering the US. Once here species like purple loosestrife or zebra mussels have proved very damaging and costly.

Ron Benjamin reviewed the results of the FLW July tournament in La Crosse. He distributed a memo detailing data gained by monitoring tournaments and fish health.

Large mouth bass virus impacts are a chief concern for bass caught in tournaments on the river during periods of warm water.

Ron also distributed a copy of the green sheet for the August DNR board meeting. The board asked that the rules be redrafted stronger thus delaying implementation. It will no doubt be 2007 before rules can be reconsidered and adopted. Ken Snow provided a commentary on summer bass tournaments which Marc Schultz read aloud to the Committee. Ron Benjamin distributed copies of a power point presentation on shovelnose sturgeon size changes for the river. Serious problems with over harvest of sturgeon for roe to be made into caviar were detailed.

Marc Schultz updated the committee on the La Crosse Airport taxiway fill and the potential to use fill dredged from sailboat club bay for fill. Mitigation is pending.

Motion by Ralph Kunkel second by Gary Dillaber to approve the minutes of the 2005 meeting of the Mississippi River Committee. Motion passed unanimously.

Concern was given regarding the lack of safe parking and access for the Stoddard EMP project.

Members discuss the next morning tour of the Pool 5 EMP project and drawdown. We will depart from the hotel at 7:30am and depart from the pool 5 spring lake boat landing at 9:00am.

Saturday Aug 19 2006

Marc Schultz, Bill Howe, Ken Snow, Wes Domine and his wife participated in a tour of the pool 5 spring lake project. Ron Benjamin and Brian Brecka Mississippi River Fish Management staff gave a briefing at the boat landing and we proceeded by boat to the channels and islands constructed by the EMP and the Channel Maintenance project. The members walked a channel maintenance island and pulled and removed young purple loosestrife plants which were transported to the boat landing and properly disposed of by DNR staff.